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Whitin, Ernest Stagg

Honor men and good  
roads everywhere

[Boston]

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# HONOR MEN AND GOOD ROADS EVERYWHERE

PUBLISHED JOINTLY BY  
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PRISON LABOR  
NATIONAL HIGHWAYS ASSOCIATION

REPRINTED, WITH SOME ADDITIONS, FROM PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
ACADEMY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, JANUARY, 1914,  
UNDER THE TITLE OF  
"GOOD ROADS AND CONVICT LABOR"



COPYRIGHT, APRIL 15, 1914, BY THE NATIONAL HIGHWAYS ASSOCIATION, WASHINGTON, D. C.



"CHAIN-GANG"  
(North Carolina)

*"This too I know — and woe it were  
If each could know the same —  
That every prison that men build  
Is built with bricks of shame;  
And bound with bars, lest Christ should see  
How men their brothers maim."*

These men happen, by chance, to be Negroes. They might, just as well, have been Whites. They might have been your or my sons. They are some one's sons. Are they better or worse for this treatment, whatever their offence? Are other people better or worse for their treatment in this wise? Are other people deterred from committing similar or other offences, knowing they will get such treatment?

## INTRODUCTION



CONVICT CANAL CONSTRUCTION  
(Louisiana)

*"We were at men who through a fen  
Of filthy darkness groped;  
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,  
Or to give our anguish scope;  
Something was dead in each of us,  
And what was dead was Hope."*

IN the *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* for the month of April, 1914, there appeared a paper entitled "Good Roads and Convict Labor."

The "Foreword" of said article was prepared by Charles Henry Davis, C.E., President of the National Highways Association, and is reprinted as part of this pamphlet.

The body of said paper contained a chapter by Sydney Wilmot, A.M., entitled "The Use of Convict Labor for Highway Construction in the North." This was an original Thesis in the Graduate Department of Highway Engineering at Columbia University. It is not reprinted herein.

The body of said paper also contained a chapter by E. Stagg Whitin, Ph.D., Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Committee on Prison Labor, entitled "Prison Industries in the State of Wisconsin." This was "A Report to the Board of Public Affairs" of the State of Wisconsin. It is also not reprinted herein.

Dr. Whitin kindly undertook to write a "Foreword to a Foreword," which was especially prepared for this pamphlet and is printed herewith.

Cambridge, Massachusetts  
April 15, 1914



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ROAD CONSTRUCTION — "CHAIN-GANG"  
(Georgia)

*"And thus we rust life's iron chain  
Degraded and alone;  
And some men weep, and some men weep,  
And some men make no moan;  
But God's eternal Laws are bind,  
And break the heart of stone."*



EARTH ROAD CONSTRUCTION — BY "CONVICT LABOR"  
(North Carolina)



ROAD CONSTRUCTION — "HONOR MEN"  
(West Virginia)

*"Because the man was one of those  
Whom Christ came down to save."*

[ 4 ]

## HONOR MEN AND GOOD ROADS EVERYWHERE

### "FOREWORD TO A FOREWORD"

E. STAGG WHITIN, PH.D.

Chairman Executive Committee, National Committee on Prison Labor



MARCHING TO THEIR HIGHWAY WORK — "HONOR MEN"  
(Arizona)

*"And the crimson stain that was of Cain  
Became Christ's snow-white seal."*

"OPEN up your jails, penitentiaries, and prisons!" cry the Good Roads associations throughout the country — "a solution is at hand for your most difficult problem. Bad men on bad roads make good roads, while good roads make good men."

"Good roads and good men" has become a slogan, and no topic of prison news to-day is more widely discussed in the press from coast to coast than this, — the employment of convicts in public road building.

Convict road making is a pressing question before the present sessions of legislatures, county supervisors, and boards of control. Members are hesitating as to what answer to make and what arguments pro or con to bring forth. The literature on the subject is abundant, but in suggestions there is little that is new. That forty-five States had laws on their statute-books in 1913 permitting the employment of convicts on State and County roads shows that a solution of the problem does not necessarily lie in legislation, but in its administration. The various forms which these laws take demonstrate the fact that there is as yet no satisfactory or uniform law. The many different experiments going on to-day appear to have grown out of local needs and conditions rather than out of any generally accepted theory of what is right from the standpoint of penology. To solve satisfactorily the difficult problem involved, or even to suggest its proper

[ 5 ]



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"HONOR CAMP"—PINAL MOUNTAINS  
(Gila County, Arizona)

*"But neither milk-white rose nor red  
May bloom in prison air;  
The shard, the pebble, and the flint*

*Are what they give us there;  
For flowers have been known to heal  
A common man's despair."*

solution, would require long research and experimentation; but perhaps it may be timely to point out some of the difficulties which must be encountered wherever convict road making is tried.

The theory that convict labor is a proper source of exploitation either by a lessee through his peonage, a contractor through his cheap contract, or a co-ordinate department of a State government through its subtle bookkeeping, is one that is untenable from any point of view. Road making is a legitimate use of State funds, and is of practical benefit to all citizens by reducing the cost of transportation of the products of the farms to the great markets; therefore anything that will expedite the building of good roads is for the common welfare. It is on this basis that it is urged that the labor of convicts be used for this purpose. The State has a right to its use, and under certain conditions it would greatly reduce the cost of production and tend to a more rapid development of good roads projects.

Still, we are face to face with a condition whereby the State directs its prison department to allow its highway department to have the labor of the convicts at little or no cost to the highway department, and consequently at a figure much below that at which free labor might be induced to seek employment in road building. The claim that free labor cannot be had at any wage for work on roads in certain communities is generally advanced as a justification for this; but the large employment agencies of the country, as well as the student of economics, will soon show conclusively that the difficulty lies not in securing labor at any price, but in reluctance to give an adequate wage which will induce labor to come into the work.

The value of the convict's labor on the roads is the same as the value of his labor in the prison factory,—the wage at which free labor can be secured to perform the same work. Shall the prison department turn over gratis its convicts to the highway department: this is the question? If it does, it is giving to the highway department exactly that amount of money for which the highway department could hire free labor. It makes little difference to the tax-payer which he is taxed to maintain, prisons or roads. Prisons are deemed a necessity and the community is afraid to get along without them. But with a single tax maintaining prisons and developing highways, what community would hesitate?

A much more legitimate argument, but one less often advanced, is the healthful, wholesome environment thrown around the convict while at work in road building. The experience of the men who developed the road work in Colorado shows that this is an advantageous way of employing able-bodied convicts—of transforming the sallow, ghost-like prisoner, fresh from the prison-pen, into a rosy, happy specimen of humanity. Under God's own sky, with the fresh air of heaven, free from shackles, and living on his honor with few guards to do more than supervise, the prisoner is surrounded by the best environment and governed under a method which is sane.

A movement equally important with that of good roads is passing over the country. Efficiency is demanded in the management of prisons, with a wage for the convict which will benefit those dependent on him. To build up an efficient organization of prison industries is a task of no mean magnitude on an inadequate salary and hampered by red tape of officialdom and incompetency of subordinates. The man at the head of prison departments needs sympathetic encouragement. To place upon him the burden of securing large appropriations for maintenance of his institution while the labor of his charges is handed over to others for exploitation is destructive of all ambition for the attainment of efficiency.

Convict road work combined with efficiency in the management of both the road and prison departments of the State government is a way out of many difficulties. The scientific analysis of road work and road cost, together with correlation of this work with other State work for convicts, make the material presented in the *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* of value to a broad and comprehensive realization of the prison-labor problem.



TRENCHING CLAY—IN "STRIPES"  
(South Carolina)

*"Out into God's sweet air we went,  
But not in wretched way;  
For this man's face was white with fear,*

*And that man's face was gray,  
And I never saw sad men who looked  
So wistfully at the day."*



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So wistfully at the day."*



CLAY FOR "SAND-CLAY" ROADS—UNDER "ARMED GUARDS"  
(Georgia)

Would you like one of your boys subjected to such conditions?  
"And they do well to hide their Hell;  
For in it things are done  
That Son of God nor son of man  
Ever should look upon."



TRENCHING CLAY—IN "STRIPES"  
(South Carolina)

"And Horror stalked before each man,  
And Terror crept behind."



CONVICT LABOR—UNDER "ARMED GUARDS"  
(North Carolina)

Would you like one of your sons shot down—some are—if, perchance, the desire for  
FREEDOM tempted him as he had been tempted in getting here?  
"The silent dead, like poison weeds,  
Bloom 'well in prison air."  
It is only what is good in man  
That wastes and withers there."

[8]

## "FOREWORD"

"Truth for Authority, not Authority for Truth"

CHARLES HENRY DAVIS, C.E.  
President National Highways Association



Courtesy the Boston Post

MODERN (?) PRISON INTERIOR

Society Destroying Men

"And as one sees most dreadful things  
In the crystal of a dream,  
We saw the greasy hempen rope  
Hoisted to the blackened beam,  
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare  
Strangled into a scream."

poor unfortunate beings! Most of them are mentally deficient and should have our care and help—not our contempt. Many of them have been sorely tempted, without ability to run from temptation. And all of us must run! Some have led honorable and useful lives and would continue to do so did society have the forbearance and forgiveness of the parent toward the child. And society should have such forgiveness, and thus restore men to society and not brand them as criminals. Our modern prisons are barbaric. They typify the medieval prisons, so loathsome to our imagination, and yet we call them modern. They are not. They still hold men in abject slavery, in idleness worse than death. Without sun. Sometimes without light. With foul air and fouler companions. Does this treatment, even of the convict, produce repentance? No; a thousand times no! Revenge, insanity, more crime, are the inevitable results.

As in many other activities, our laws and their administration are fifty years behind the times. Once there, how many of us could resist the debauching

[9]



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MODERN (?) PRISON EXTERIOR AND YARD  
Helpless — Heartless — Hopeless

"I never saw sad men who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little row of blue

We prisoners called the sky,  
And at every convict along that passed  
In happy freedom by.

criminals? How many of us could return to the life outside without a feeling of bitterness, or resentment, against our whole social structure? We have abolished negro slavery — a paradise to that of criminal slavery. We maintain institutions little better than the torture-chambers of ancient times. They are not designed for reform, tuition, enlightenment. They offer little incentive to right living, high ideals. They are not places where erring humanity may be schooled and trained to become good citizens. They are more fit to drag and trample down into the mire the poor unfortunates sent there for their "first offence." There, even plant life does not exist. The grass, the plants, the flowers, the trees, do not grow within their yards. How much less does man! Could there be greater shame to our Nation than thus to cling to the ancient custom of depriving men of their freedom, shutting them up within four walls, leaving them to their fate? "Men are but children of a larger growth." But do we treat our children in this wise? Do we not believe in pointing out to them and making attractive and possible the road to virtue? Do we rather enslave and chastise them unmercifully for having failed to find it out themselves? We used to when parents held the lives of their children in their hands! The State now so holds the lives of its citizens.

When shall we take such power away? In our criminal procedure we now have the spirit of punishment, cruelty, unkindness, physical force, slavery, confinement, isolation, darkness, silence, and all the resultant evils thereof,



THE MODERN (?) CHAIN-GANG  
MAKING CRIMINALS, NOT MEN OR ROADS  
(North Carolina — Armed Guards)

"But though lean Hunger and green Thirst  
Like asp with adder fight,  
We have little care of prison fare;

For what chills and bills outright  
Is that every stone one lifts by day?  
Become one's heart by night."

influences? How many of us could resist the degrading example of those associates more steeped in crime and hardened by their previous contact with still earlier

— resistance, revenge, sullenness, depravity, hopelessness, insanity.

We should turn on the light; we should give men the sunshine, the free air and fields of the country. We should have, and thus give, hope, faith, help. We should correct, not punish. We should be kind and square and our "pals" will respond most wonderfully. Children are not controlled by physical force. Deliberate, low-voiced, firm kindness and square doing gain their obedience. So it is with their larger brothers. What results to be attained by such a change — change in our moral acknowledgment of the wrongs we have done to the convict! We have been too long blind to this wrong thinking and doing. We have had too much pride, too little charity. We have admired too long the public prosecutor. We have delayed too long the coming of the public defender.

How can we do all this? We must do something with those who violate the rules. Yes! But that something should be to help them not to break the rules again. Temporary exile, into a temporary society as nearly as possible like the one they left, would seem the best solution. They would thus be learning to play the game according to the rules. Responsibility, during their temporary exile, would increase the desire to play so well, so fairly, that they could go back from whence they came.



MODERN (?)  
GUILLOTINE  
Society makes the criminal  
and then legalizes his murder

"Right in we went, with cool intent  
On Death and Dread and Doom;  
The hangman, with his little dog,  
Went shuffling through the gloom;  
And each man trembled as he crept  
Into his numbered tomb."

To do this we must get them "Back to the land." But how? One way is via good roads, although some prefer railroading!

To have Good Roads Everywhere throughout these United States will mean more to this Nation than any other development since our Declaration of Independence. During all ages it has been of primary importance to provide a people with means of intercommunication. People, like water, must move or stagnate. They must run and play like the brook itself or become sluggish and dull — to themselves as well as to others. Of the seven modes of intercommunication — water, roads, post, railroad, telegraph, telephone, and wireless — only one, roads, is free to all the people of the earth. Roads are the most universally used and are therefore the most beneficial to the greatest number of people. The importance of Good Roads Everywhere is paramount — their benefits are all-embracing.

There are 18,000,000 children who endeavor to attend school. There are over 30,000,000 who should attend school. Why don't they? Largely because during much of the school term a considerable part of



MODERN (?) TORTURE-CHAMBER—THE "HOLE"  
Alone—Deserted—Forgotten

"And what should Human Pity do  
For wags in Murderers' Holes?  
What word of grace in such a place  
Could help a brother's soul?"



Courtesy the Boston Post

**MODERN (?) PRISON EXTERIOR AND YARD**  
**Helpless — Heartless — Hopeless**

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— resistance, revenge, sullenness, depravity, hopelessness, insanity.

We should turn on the light; we should give men the sunshine, the free air and fields of the country. We should have, and thus give, hope, faith, help. We should correct, not punish. We should be kind and square and our "pals" will respond most wonderfully. Children are not controlled by physical force. Deliberate, low-voiced, firm kindness and square doing gain their obedience. So it is with their larger brothers. What results to be attained by such a change — change in our moral acknowledgment of the wrongs we have done to the convict! We have been too long blind to this wrong thinking and doing. We have had too much pride, too little charity. We have admired too long the public prosecutor. We have delayed too long the coming of the public defender.

How can we do all this? We must do something with those who violate the rules. Yes! But that something should be to help them not to break the rules again. Temporary exile, into a temporary society as nearly as possible like the one they left, would seem the best solution. They would thus be learning to play the game according to the rules. Responsibility, during their temporary exile, would increase the desire to play so well, so fairly, that they could go back from whence they came. To do this we must get them "Back to the land." But how? One way is via good roads, although some prefer railroading!



Courtesy the Boston Post

**MODERN (?)**  
**GUILLOTINE**

Society makes the criminal  
 and then legalizes his murder  
 "Right in we went, with soul intent  
 On Death and Dread and Doom;  
 The hangman, with his little bag,  
 Went shuffling through the gloom;  
 And each man trembled as he crept  
 Into his numbered tomb."



Courtesy the Boston Post

**MODERN (?) TORTURE-CHAMBER—THE "HOLE"**  
**Alone—Deserted—Forgotten**  
*"And what should I mean? Why do  
 I find up in Murderers' Holes?  
 What world of grace is such a place  
 Could help a brother's soul?"*

To have Good Roads Everywhere throughout these United States will mean more to this Nation than any other development since our Declaration of Independence. During all ages it has been of primary importance to provide a people with means of intercommunication. People, like water, must move or stagnate. They must run and play like the brook itself or become sluggish and dull — to themselves as well as to others. Of the seven modes of intercommunication — water, roads, post, railroad, telegraph, telephone, and wireless — only one, roads, is free to all the people of the earth. Roads are the most universally used and are therefore the most beneficial to the greatest number of people. The importance of Good Roads Everywhere is paramount — their benefits are all-embracing.

There are 18,000,000 children who endeavor to attend school. There are over 30,000,000 who should attend school. Why don't they? Largely because during much of the school term a considerable part of



Courtesy National Highways Association

REAL LIFE MAKING REAL MEN  
Governor Hunt in camp with "Honor Men" (Arizona)

parentage is illiterate, while rural illiteracy is six hundred per cent greater in the same class of inhabitants. How can we have or get good schools in the rural districts if we have not the good roads to reach them at all times and in all seasons? If we do not have good schools, and illiteracy results, then we help — in the best possible way — the growth of the criminal classes.

The relation of good and bad roads to illiteracy, and thus to crime, is indicated by the accompanying table.

	Native White of Native Parentage Total Population (1910)	Per cent Improved Roads (1909)	Per cent of Illiterate Native Whites of Native Parentage (1910)		
			Total	Urban	Rural
New England: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut	2,135,801 6,552,681	22.2	0.7	0.5	1.2
South Atlantic: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida	5,397,864 12,194,895	6.7	8.0	2.2	9.8
Pacific: Washington, Oregon, California	1,684,658 4,192,304	14.2	0.4	0.3	0.6
West South Central: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas	4,101,510 8,784,534	2.6	5.6	1.4	6.8

This table does not of course include foreign-born, native-born of foreign parentage, or negroes, all of whom are excluded for obvious rea-



Courtesy National Highways Association

"GOOD ROADS EVERYWHERE" — MAKING MEN AND ROADS  
Governor Hunt with "Honor Men" (Arizona)

the 2,000,000 miles of our roads is impassable. This is shown by the fact that only nine-tenths of one per cent (0.9%) of the urban white population of the United States of na-

sons. Illiteracy is eleven times greater in the South Atlantic States than in New England, while the percentage of improved roads (such as they are) is less than one-third. Similar figures for the Pacific and West South Central are: fourteen times greater illiteracy, while the percentage of improved roads is less than one-fifth as much. The excess of illiteracy in rural over urban New England



Courtesy National Highways Association

OVER 1,500,000 MILES OF SUCH ROADS IN THE UNITED STATES  
Bad Roads Everywhere help to make Bad Men Everywhere

"For man's grim Justice goes its way,  
And will not spare the weak,  
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,

It has a deadly stride;  
With iron heel it slays the strong,  
The monstrous parricide!"



Courtesy National Highways Association

THE CHILDREN OF TO-DAY ARE THE ELECTORS, THE REPRESENTATIVES, THE SENATORS, THE JUDGES, ONE OF THEM THE PRESIDENT, OF TO-MORROW

"Good Roads Everywhere" will help make "Good Men Everywhere"

THE GAOL

"For they starve the little frightened child  
Till it sneezes both night and day;  
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,

And give the old and gray;  
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,  
And none a word may say."

is only one hundred and forty per cent, while in the South Atlantic States this excess is nearly four hundred per cent, due to the lower percentage of improved roads. This difference is slightly greater in comparing the other two groups

in the table.

The children of to-day are the electors, the representatives, the senators, the judges, one of them the President, of to-morrow. The popula-



Courtesy National Highways Association

EDUCATION MEANS LIBERTY. POOR ROADS MEAN  
ILLITERACY OR WORSE

Good Roads pay for themselves within the generation which builds them





Courtesy National Highways Association

**REAL LIFE MAKING REAL MEN**  
Governor Hunt in camp with "Honor Men" (Arizona)

native parentage is illiterate, while rural illiteracy is six hundred per cent greater in the same class of inhabitants. How can we have or get good schools in the rural districts if we have not the good roads to reach them at all times and in all seasons? If we do not have good schools, and illiteracy results, then we help — in the best possible way — the growth of the criminal classes.

The relation of good and bad roads to illiteracy, and thus to crime, is indicated by the accompanying table.

	Native White of Native Parentage Total Population (1910)	Per cent Improved Roads (1909)	Per cent of Illiterate Native Whites of Native Parentage (1910)		
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Courtesy National Highways Association

**"GOOD ROADS EVERYWHERE" — MAKING MEN AND ROADS**  
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[ 12 ]

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**EDUCATION MEANS LIBERTY. POOR ROADS MEAN ILLITERACY OR WORSE**

Good Roads pay for themselves within the generation which builds them

The children of to-day are the electors, the representatives, the senators, the judges, one of them the President, of to-morrow. The popula-

[ 13 ]



tion is increasing by leaps and bounds. If education means liberty, and if poor roads mean illiteracy or worse, have we a right *not* to build good roads, even if they would not pay for themselves well within the generation which builds them?

To-day we have preventive medicine. Instead of waiting to cure people of disease, we are bending every effort to prevent disease. Why not profit thereby? Crime is a kind of disease. Why not do those things which will prevent crime? Idleness more than any other one thing produces moral deterioration and crime. The building of "Good Roads Everywhere" by the Nation, the State, the County, and the Town will give constant employment to the army of unemployed. This will tend to prevent crime if we apply it rightly.

What better thing than to employ those temporarily withdrawn from our society in the building of "Good Roads Everywhere"? Such a policy will be of vast economic advantage to the Nation. It will give brawn, brain, and heart to those most needing it. It will give them freedom of mind and body. It will give them inspiration, hope. Tear down our prison walls, and rear no more, for they are festering-places for our fellow beings. Let us no longer go back on those of our own mold! Let us rather, from now on, give our "pals" a "square deal"! We can be sure they will answer in kind!



*Courtesy National Highway Association*

"GOOD ROADS EVERYWHERE" HELP TO MAKE "GOOD MEN EVERYWHERE"



CONVICT ROAD CONSTRUCTION  
(West Virginia)



PRISON CAMP—COUNTY CONVICTS  
(West Virginia)

*"With midnight always in one's heart,  
And twilight in one's cell,  
We turn the crank, or tear the rope.*

*Each in his separate Hell;  
And the silence is more awful far  
Than the sound of a broken bell."*



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Than the sound of a brass bell.*



CONVICT ROAD CONSTRUCTION  
(West Virginia)



ROAD DRAG — IN "STRIPES"  
(Georgia)

*"With slouch and swing around the ring  
We trod the Fools' Parade!  
We did not care; we knew we were*

*The Devil's Own Brigade.  
And shaven head and feet of lead  
Make a merry masquerade."*



CONVICT ROAD CONSTRUCTION  
(West Virginia)



CELL ROOM — CONVICT LABOR  
(Louisiana)

*"And never a human voice comes near  
To speak a gentle word;  
And the eye that watches through the door*

*Is pitiless and hard;  
And by all forged, we rot and rot,  
With soul and body marred."*

[16]



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